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Changes to Met Office forecasts

5 March 2010

The short-term forecasts provided by the Met Office are extremely accurate, providing reliable forecasts for a period of between one to five days. We are privileged to enjoy considerable public support for these forecasts, and to be recognised by our peers around the world as leaders in weather forecasting.

Of course, by their nature, forecasts become less accurate the further out we look. Although we can identify general patterns of weather, the science does not exist to allow an exact forecast beyond five days, or to absolutely promise a certain type of weather. As a result, 'seasonal forecasts' cannot be as precise as our short-term forecasts.

The UK is one of the hardest places to provide forecasts for because of our size and location. The weather in temperate climates such as the UK is very hard to forecast much beyond a week.

The Met Office is working hard to develop the science of long range forecasting, including for the UK, and will continue at the forefront of innovation in this area.

We take seriously our responsibility to provide the best possible service to the public. Although long range forecasts are vital in some parts of the world, and can be useful for some specialists, such as insurers and energy traders, we know that they are of limited use to the public – for example they are not something that could be used to plan a holiday.

In our customer research the public have told us they would like a monthly outlook. We have therefore decided to stop issuing a UK 'seasonal forecast' four times a year. Instead, we will now publish a monthly outlook, updated on a weekly basis.

Although the limitations in science mean monthly forecasts are themselves a developing area of forecasting and will therefore be less precise than our short-term forecasts, the public have told us that a monthly outlook would be of use to them.

What you can expect from our forecasts

Contact information

Met Office Press Office: **+44 (0)1392 886655**

E-mail: Press Office

Met Office Customer Centre: **0870 900 0100**

If you're outside the UK: **+44 1392 885680**